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Lynn Power, RN, MN
Executive Director
College of Registered Nurses of NL
lpower@crnml.ca

Dear Lynn,

I'm reaching out today asking for the CRNML's assistance with a pharmacy workflow issue related to faxed prescriptions that has developed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While faxing prescriptions to pharmacies has been standard practice pre-COVID-19, it was not standard that every prescription would be faxed for every patient. Many, if not most, of these prescriptions would normally have been given to the patient and would be brought to the pharmacy when the patient needed it filled. Given the uptake in virtual care and telemedicine, which pharmacists support, pharmacies are now receiving all prescriptions directly. This means hundreds of faxed prescriptions a day – many all coming in at the same time from multiple offices (lunch and supper time seem to be the peak time for prescriptions to arrive). Patients are then showing up at the pharmacy immediately and expecting their prescriptions to be available for pick up and some have been noting that they were advised by the prescriber that the pharmacy would have it ready.

This is creating a significant amount of patient frustration and line-ups within pharmacies. This is problematic for social distancing requirements and rules around the maximum number of patrons permitted in pharmacies at one time. In addition, it is creating significant stress for pharmacists, technicians and assistants who are trying to keep up with the influx of prescriptions being sent directly to the pharmacy while trying to maintain the same level of service. In addition, a significant amount of time is being spent explaining why prescriptions are not ready yet over and over.

It would be very helpful if the CRNML would send a communication to your prescribing members asking for them to advise patients to wait at least 24 hours before showing up at the pharmacy for their prescription. If it is urgent, the patient should be advised to contact the pharmacy, note it is urgent, and be provided with an accurate wait time. Patients with non-urgent refill requests should be advised to contact their pharmacy to arrange a pick up time. This will help manage pharmacy workflow immensely and ensure patients in more urgent need are able to get their prescriptions in a timely manner.

It would also be helpful if prescribers would include the patient's MCP number on the prescription – pharmacies are encountering delays in filling prescriptions as they are unable to identify the patient when the prescription only includes the patient's name.

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Collingwood
Executive Director, Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador